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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Curtain Commentary

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Morse Salisbury, Office of Information, broadcast Monday, October 18, 1937, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour.

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MR. SALISBURY: Here we are in Washington. And here's Ruth Van Deman ready to start us off on a new week with what's new in home economics. Ruth, you don't seem to have any paper bags of avocados or other comestibles along with you today.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Comestibles -- is that a fancy name for free lunch?

MR. SALISBURY: Not lunch, Ruth, mere appetizers. You know these other fellows around here steal the food right out from under my ---

MISS VAN DEMAN: Microphone. Yes, I know.

MR. SALISBURY: Now if and when we talk about apples and turkeys this fall ---

MISS VAN DEMAN: Is that a hint?

MR. SALISBURY: If you care to take it that way.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, I certainly have started something.

MR. SALISBURY: You have, definitely.

MISS VAN DEMAN: But I do have a few samples, here in my bag.

MR. SALISBURY: Trot 'em out.

MISS VAN DEMAN: They're not edibles though. They're hangables.

MR. SALISBURY: Hangables?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, these are samples of a few curtain fabrics worthy to be hung.

MR. SALISBURY: (Well, I'll be hanged.)

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, worthy to be hung. That's one of the first things you have to think about in curtain materials, Morse, whether they have real hanging qualities.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, this is too much for me. I'm going to turn the microphone over to you and let you talk about these curtains.

(over)

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, No. Don't do that. Hang around.

MR. SALISBURY: (Hang it, there you go again.)

MISS VAN DEMAN: I'm sure you have ideas about window curtains and draperies. Here, you take this bulletin of Bess Viemont's --

MR. SALISBURY: Farmer's Bulletin 1633. Window Curtaining. I'm opening to page one-

MISS VAN DEMAN: All right. There, right inside the cover, I think you'll find a list of typical curtain fabrics

MR. SALISBURY: I do. Shall I read?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Please do.

MR. SALISBURY: (reading) "Curtain fabrics for every type of house and window can be found in 100 or more standard and novelty materials."

MISS VAN DEMAN: Now farther down, isn't there a list of kinds suitable for glass curtains --

MR. SALISBURY: Yes, "Batiste, cheesecloth, dimity, lawn, madras" -- I hope you won't ask me to identify all these.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Don't worry. Go on.

MR. SALISBURY: "Marquisette, mull, nets and laces, organdie, pongee, scrim, swiss, theatrical gauze, voile." That's all.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Not all by any means. Those are just typical ones to show the variety of fabrics suitable for thin curtains to hang close to the window.

MR. SALISBURY: Which I suppose is what you mean by glass curtains.

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's right.

MR. SALISBURY: I'm glad to know exactly what that term means. And I'd like to know for sure about draw curtains. Are they the ones with pulleys in the rod and cords and weights hanging down at the side to pull the curtains back and forth with?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes. That's an excellent working definition. You seem to be right up on the subject of window curtains, Morse.

MR. SALISBURY: I have put up a few rods in the course of my life, domestic and otherwise --

MISS VAN DEMAN: Haven't we all. And I find that the rods and arrangements for hanging curtains are getting easier to manage every year. I remember the first draw curtains I had. They required specially cut brass rods and I

had to string them and knot and tie the cords just so. And go through all that every time they came down to be washed. Now rods come all strung ready for draw curtains to be hooked right on.

MR. SALISBURY: I notice that more and more people are using draw curtains.

MISS VAN DEMAN: They serve a triple purpose. They dress the window - that is give it a finished look that ties it in with the other furnishings in the room. Yet they can be pulled back when you want to get the view from your window, and let in the greatest possible amount of light and air. And they can be drawn completely when you want privacy.

MR. SALISBURY: And isn't that just about the real purpose of curtains anyway?

MISS VAN DEMAN: It should be. But unfortunately the desire to decorate sometimes runs away with us. We ruffle, and flounce, and drape, and overhang windows until their real purpose is lost.

MR. SALISBURY. Then the architects throw up their hands and wonder why they ever bothered to put windows into the house plan. I know.

MISS VAN DEMAN: As home economists we're all for having window curtains that are decorative but also useful and practical. You'll notice Miss Viemont devotes only three or four pages in that bulletin to principles of design as applied to window curtaining. Then she goes straight into fabrics and kinds and uses of window curtains.

MR. SALISBURY: Yes, this looks like a very practical handbook on window curtaining. I see it has quite a section here in the back on making and hanging.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, there are still a good many people who want to buy the yard goods and make their curtains. And of course that has to be done when windows are off the standard shape and size. These samples I have here are of filet nets and casement cloth that come by the yard. But when Miss Viemont and I went shopping the other day, we found a larger selection in the ready mades. That seems to be the tendency now -- to buy curtains ready made.

MR. SALISBURY: And sensible, isn't it?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, and sometimes just as economical if you know how to judge quality. By quality I mean workmanship and construction details, like width of hems, and stitching, and edge finishes, as well as points about the curtain fabrics themselves. It really pays to find out all you can about weave, yarn twist, and whether its one ply or two ply, and whether the fibers are cotton or rayon or maybe some of both.

MR. SALISBURY: Then at least you know what you're paying your money for.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Exactly. I'm always interested to know what one of these textile specialists buys for her own use. I found that Miss Viemont is

choosing filet net for the new curtains for her house this fall.

MR. SALISBURY: That's this stuff here with a square mesh like window screening?

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's right.

MR. SALISBURY: Seems to have good visibility.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, and ventilating qualities too. These are samples of three grades of filet net. They're all cotton.

MR. SALISBURY: The majority of curtain materials are, I suppose.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Correct. Though some are made of other fibers.

MR. SALISBURY: As I recall it, one of the main reasons for the research on all household textiles is to help consumers judge quality and at the same time widen the use of American cotton.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Quite true. Our work has the double purpose of helping consumer and producer.

MR. SALISBURY: Now to get back to these materials. Sorry I interrupted.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Not at all. Glad you helped explain why we carry on these types of work. Now any one of these three grades of filet net would give good service. It just depends on how much you want to pay. Generally, the finer the mesh the higher the price. And you want to be sure the threads are knotted together where they cross to form the square mesh. Morse, try running your thumb nail across that fabric, you'll see the yarns won't slip.

MR. SALISBURY: Here goes for the thumb nail test - (Boy, I didn't know it was going to make a noise like that.)

MISS VAN DEMAN: (Maybe we've discovered a new sound effect.) Anyway you see the little squares are still square.

MR. SALISBURY: Perfectly. Is the color of this what you call ecru?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, ecru or deep cream color. Miss Viemont likes that shade for curtain material. It tones in with most wall papers, and makes good "background" for almost any color of rugs and furniture. Also it tempers the light coming in the window and "warms" it more than a pure white or very pale cream curtain. She had her last filet net curtains five years, and as they washed lighter she tinted them ecru every now and then to keep that soft warm color.

MR. SALISBURY: Which is certainly very easy on the eyes.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And she is very careful to have hems the same width on both sides of each curtain. A hem about one and a quarter inches wide up the outer as well as the center edge. Then she can change the individual curtains around, and keep the wear more even. Also a thin material like net is bound

to stretch along the selvage, no matter how firm that selvage is. We saw high priced net curtains that had never been out of the store with selvage edges all stretched into ruffles. Net curtains need hems all the way around to hold them in shape.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, Ruth, I guess we'll have to draw the curtains on this interesting subject for this time.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, I know time's up. There's so much to say when you get to talking about window curtains it's hard to tell where to stop. No wonder Miss Viemont wrote this 30 page bulletin, and then she didn't tell all.

MR. SALISBURY: I'd like to give the title and number of that again -

MISS VAN DEMAN: All right, I'll leave that to you, Morse. And I'll say good bye until Thursday next week.

MR. SALISBURY: Yes, next week we'll be back on regular schedule. Miss Van Deman will be here again a week from this coming Thursday, October 28. Now just to get the name and number of this bulletin straight. It is "Window Curtaining," Farmers' Bulletin 1633. If any of the homemakers in this audience are having difficulty in choosing or making curtains, we'll be glad to send a copy of "Window Curtaining," Farmers' Bulletin 1633.

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